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Louisa C. McCord

Thesis By
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*Louisa Cheves McCord**

WOMAN, PATRIOT, SCHOLAR.

Human accomplishment throughout the ages has been so largely masculine accomplishment that when the narrative of the race's life records periods of emphatic feminine achievement the mention is remarkable. All know that, oftenest silent, the woman spirit has been the motor power of man's life. And yet there have been periods when her conceptions have been executed independently of man's strength. Such a period occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century as the natural and to-be-expected reaction from early Victorian standards. It was a period when artificialities became unfashionable in the world. The mind of man was excursive, inquisitive, experimental.

Imagination was freed by geographical explorations and scientific discoveries, and the usual expansion of thought that always succeeds an expansion of natural limits expressed itself in the political activity of Garibaldi, the novels of Victor Hugo, the poetry of Tennyson. Public opinion was stirred through the current reviews, which noted the creation of Jean Valjean, the satire of Thackeray, the establishment of the Second Republic, the awakening of "Young Italy," the discovery of the planet Neptune.

In those days Patti and Jenny Lind were singing in Europe's capitals. Mrs. Jameson, Charlotte Bronte, Miss Sedgwick, Augusta Evans Wilson, Mrs. Ritchie, Margaret Junkin Preston and a list of others were among the women of this wonderful age. During this period Florence Nightingale out in the Crimea was laying the foundation for international mercy, George Eliot was writing her great novels and entering the hearts of a society whose doors were closed to her, Harriet Beecher Stowe's

*Christened Louisa Susanna. Identified in documentary sources as Louisa S. McCord.

imagination was precipitating armed disunion in the United States.

It was in this age that the literary school of Charleston flourished. American literature has as yet no great name; there is no Homer, nor Dante, nor Milton among American writers; but there are two schools of American poetry centered about Boston and Charleston respectively whose work will endure. And the Charleston school of this period very intimately influenced and inspired the subject of this monograph, Louisa Susannah Cheves McCord.

Timrod, Hayne, Simms, William Henry Trescott, Requier and Legare were her contemporaries. Some of these were among her personal friends; the work of them all was the pride of old Carolina.

There is no question that Louisa McCord was inspired by the achievements of the world's great men and women of her age, and by the literary school of Charleston, with whose names she deserves the place of the first woman writer of the period.

When some chronicler records this school's attainments and influence, after Timrod and Hayne and Simms and Legare will come Louisa McCord.

The Preparation

In the beautiful old-world city of Charleston, South Carolina, on December 3, 1810, Louisa Susanna, daughter of Langdon Cheves and Mary Elizabeth Dulles, was born. By ancestry¹ she was destined to be a person of strength of conviction and richness of imagination. Her paternal grandfather, Alexander Cheves, came from Aberdeen, Scotland, to this country in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He married Mary Langdon, a daughter of Dr. Thomas Langdon, of Virginia. They settled in the frontier country of South Carolina in what is now Abbeville county. Here, during an Indian raid on September 17, 1776, in a block house where the people had taken refuge from the Indians, Langdon Cheves was born.

¹ The genealogical data used in this monograph is taken from MSS. statistics and personal letters kindly furnished by Mrs. Augustine T. Smythe, Sr., and by Mr. John Bennett, Charleston, S. C.

This child of British emigration and of frontier hardships became the father of **Louisa McCord**. Her maternal grandfather, **Joseph Dulles**, a native of Dublin, came to this country during the same period in which **Alexander Cheves** had come. He married **Sophia**, the daughter of **Colonel William Heatley**, of **St. Matthew's parish**, **South Carolina**, and his wife, **Maria Louisa Courtonne**, the daughter of a **Huguenot pastor**. Their daughter, **Mary Elizabeth**, became the wife of **Langdon Cheves**. Thus were combined the solidity and tenacity of the **Scotch temperament** with the "passionate persistency to a moral ideal" and the charm and versatility of poetic Ireland. Of this union **Louisa** was the first-born. There is no doubt that she inherited her intellectual ability from her father, of whom **Petigru** said: "The leading characteristics of his mind were power and grandeur."¹

The early years of **Louisa Cheves'** life were so closely influenced by her father's interests and surroundings that a bit of his biography must be here interwoven. In **October, 1810** (the year of her birth), **Langdon Cheves** was elected from the **Charleston Congressional District** to Congress, where he took his seat in session with **Lowndes, Williams and Calhoun**, forming an integral factor of that group of Southern statesmen whose opinions express a distinct school of political purpose and constitutional interpretation in our national history. In **1814** **Clay** was appointed on the **Ghent Commission**, and in the vacancy created by his absence **Cheves** was made **Speaker of the House**. This position he held until **1816**. From **1816 to 1819** he was **Judge of the State Circuit Court of South Carolina**. During these years **Louisa** was a little child. When she was nine years old **Langdon Cheves** was called to adjust the financial difficulties of the **United States Bank at Philadelphia**. "At this time his two daughters, **Louisa and Sophia**, the latter of whom became **Mrs. Charles Thompson Haskell**, were sent to the school of a **Mr. Grimshaw**, a highly educated Irishman then living in **Philadelphia**. Later the sisters were placed under

¹ O'Neill's Bench and Bar of South Carolina, Vol. I. Cheves, pp. 133-139.

the care of M. and Mme. Picot, French refugees, with whom they continued to study for several years, becoming thoroughly conversant with the French language."¹ Subsequently the girls were introduced to Washington and Philadelphia society. During a part of this period the Cheves family lived in "Abbeville," outside of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.² We learn that, after a residence here of about eight years, the men of the town "tendered Mr. Cheves a complimentary farewell dinner," and that the family then retired to South Carolina.³

At this time Louisa was a young woman of twenty. During her girlhood she had received the best sort of education that women of her day might get. She had attended thorough elementary schools, where she had attained a high degree of excellence in scholarship, and she had been brought during adolescent years into the companionship of great minds.

It had not been her father's intention to educate his daughters in any other way than that usually given women in that day—a lighter academic course, with a "finishing school" for French, astronomy, etc. The graces of education were stressed rather than fundamentals. But Louisa Cheves early developed the unusual feminine trait of a perfect passion for mathematics. This was passed unnoticed until an accident revealed it. Her brothers were instructed in mathematics by a private tutor in their own home. Louisa Cheves, then a mere child of about ten years, was perfectly fascinated by the problems set them and their demonstrations and by the general demonstration by their tutor of general principles of mathematics. Not being admitted to their classes or to such instruction, she formed the habit of concealing herself behind the door of the study and of listening

¹ Account from Mrs. Augustine T. Smythe, Sr. MSS.

² Papers read before Lancaster County (Penn.) Historical Society, February 1, 1907. Vol. IX, p. 2. Langdon Cheves, pp. 45-58.

³ Retired to Charleston, S. C., where he lived at Polnsett's Grove, on Charleston Neck, where now stands Ashley Hall, the well-known girls' school. After the marriage of his daughter, Sophia, he removed his family to "Lang Syne" plantation, Fort Motte, establishing a summer place in Abbeville county known as "Portman Shoals." Thus the family lived until the death of Mrs. Cheves, after which Langdon Cheves took up rice-planting on his Savannah River plantations and kept his residence in Savannah.

there to the daily hour of mathematics, and of attempting for herself, from knowledge so gathered, the demonstration of the problems set her brothers. She was discovered behind the door by her father, who, questioning her, discovered her passion for such branches of a man's education, and wisely said that a girl with such a love of knowledge should have every opportunity to perfect herself not only in mathematics, but also in other branches not then usually undertaken by women. She was then given just the same mathematical instruction that her brothers received, and her education was carried on upon these lines. In this her education was unusual.

In her father's study and at his table she met and heard the discourse of men whose speech has expressed national policies, whose style both in written and in spoken English is classic. Her father's contemporaries were Webster, Calhoun, Clay and their associates. Political economy was the gospel of their theories; statecraft was their game. The young girl, hearing them express their theories, seeing them play their game, learned to think deeply on political issues. She noted the hearts and minds of great men at work. She developed an aversion to wasted time or wasted energy. What a foundation on which to build a womanhood! And what a splendidly serviceable womanhood she built upon this foundation!

In the days when the Tariff of Abominations split the country into two antagonistic factions Langdon Cheves held for the principle of self-determination. He ardently and openly opposed South Carolina's nullification measures. He held the movement to be in contravention of the delegated powers of the national legislature; but, in order that justice be done, he advocated, at the Nashville convention of 1850, a secession, if necessary for harmony, of those States against whose interests the tariff and other antagonistic measures were aimed, and that a confederation of them be formed that their common heritage, common interests and common future be protected.¹ "It has been said of Mrs. McCord in her youth that she

¹ O'Neill's Bench and Bar of South Carolina, Vol. I, Cheves, pp. 133-139.

had two grand passions—for her father and her State,”² and this secession theory of Mr. Cheves influenced Mrs. McCord and largely determined her mature writing. When armed division came, in 1861, she was a complete Confederate.

The Fulfillment

When quite a young woman she came into the possession of “Lang Syne,” formerly belonging to a great-aunt, Mrs. Lovell, a daughter of Colonel William Heatley. “Lang Syne” is a beautiful plantation in St. Matthew’s parish, on the Congaree River near Fort Motte, about thirty miles from Columbia. This she administered during her young womanhood with a high degree of skill, exhibiting remarkable executive ability and a careful attention to details. Evidently her mind found its first literary expression also at this time. Judging by the style and spirit of her “Dreams,” published much later, the student of girl psychology and of the poetic outcry that the lyrist uses must conclude that some of these doubts of adolescence, some of these dreams of the young woman-heart were composed during these years in practically the same form in which they were later published, though there is to be found no suggestion of this theory in other brief sketches of Mrs. McCord, and when her poems were first published it appears that they came from the press as a surprise to those who were accustomed to enjoy her prose work.³

In 1840 she was married² to Colonel David J. McCord, a distinguished lawyer of South Carolina, widely and favorably known by his “Reports in Law and in Equity” and by his “Statutes at Large of South Carolina” and by “Mott and McCord’s Reports.”³ They were married only fifteen years when Colonel McCord died, but those fifteen years were the richest years of Louisa McCord’s life in a

² Sketch of Mrs. McCord by Miss Isabel D. Martin, p. 13 of Lang Syne Memories, a privately published collection.

³ Sketch of Mrs. McCord by Hon. William Porcher Miles—Lang Syne Collection, p. 7, sq.

² Family records. See also Library Southern Literature, Vol. VIII, p. 3303; Southern Writers—Wauchope, p. 269.

³ O’Neill’s Bench and Bar of South Carolina, Vol. II, pp. 510-511.



Louisa S. McCord.

realization of girl dreams, in a beautifully co-operative wifehood and in the production of her translations, her excellent critical politico-economic reviews and essays and her poetry.

At the time of her marriage to Colonel McCord he was the president of a Columbia bank, and these years were spent partly at Columbia, but mainly at "Lang Syne." Of her life here there are available several published sketches, numerous allusions¹ and some charming reminiscences.

As a young woman she developed the habit of making that necessary daily round of plantation supervision on horseback, a habit that not only saved time, but served as an excellent exercise in the early hours of the day. "She was one of the many Southern women who took her responsibilities very seriously and devoted time and thought to the welfare and happiness of her servants as well as to the prosperity of her home."² "She once said, when it was remarked that she wore no jewelry, that she did not see how a woman with over two hundred children could afford diamonds."² This story is often repeated by those who knew her. "Her diamonds were homes for her people, built for healthfulness and comfort, and in addition to all the outfit of a plantation there were provided a hospital with nurses for the sick and a day nursery for the children."² "As doctors were not in easy reach, naturally great responsibility rested day and night on the mistress, who often had to be both doctor and apothecary."² This service not only was a splendid preparation for her later usefulness in the Confederate military hospital at Columbia, but also through it her kindness and sympathy served to establish that unquestioned bond of love that existed between herself and her servants.

To quote Mrs. Smythe further: "'Lang Syne,' like most plantation homes, was the scene of much quiet, unpretentious hospitality." Many great men of different sections of the country were charmingly entertained here, as well

¹ See Bibliography.

² Mrs. Augustine T. Smythe, Sr., MSS. correspondence.

as in the McCord Columbia home, and with that deepest of all courtesies, the freedom of "making one's self at home" in a Southern household. James B. Angell, in his "Reminiscences," states that "Our visit (to the plantation) corrected our impression that the life of the planter and his wife was one free from care. They did have more leisure than the Northern farmers. But careful management was required to secure good profits. And the negroes, careless about their health, called for much attention. Our hostess, during our visit, was up all night caring for a sick negro baby. She had given much attention to the economics of plantation life. She told us that she would prefer to have \$25,000 in good bank stock rather than \$100,000 in negroes and plantations. * * * We walked out with Mr. McCord to the negro quarters. He had one hundred and thirty-seven negroes at the time, and was building new and comfortable tenements for them. He had a house in which all the negro children were kept during the day, in charge of attendants, and a hospital provided with nurses. Every negro had his particular task and drew his ration of food. The arrangements were very systematical. The children sang hymns for us, and all of them, down to the veriest tot, sang *con amore*, as legs, arms and bodies were called into requisition. * * * We were hospitably entertained by dinner parties and hunting parties on the plantations in the neighborhood. Partridges, rabbits and squirrels were the game sought."¹

E. D. Worthington, M. D., of Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, writes: "If any of the negroes were sick, she had the medicine chest, and dispensed liberally, and, as when I was there, there was an epidemic of pneumonia very fatal to the blacks, I rode with her, and we made our inspection. * * * This Ben, * * * a boy of twelve, had contraction of the flexor tendons. He could only lie down in the sand and crawl in the sun! One day I suggested dividing the tendons. * * * McCord sent to Charleston

¹ Reminiscences of James B. Angell, pp. 59-60.

for a tenotomy knife, and * * * we straightened out the boy in no time. * * *

"That boy was as tenderly cared for as if he were the son of a white man. * * * I mention these little incidents of plantation life to show how different I saw things from what Mrs. Stowe described. I have never seen the whip used—never saw a black ill treated. On the contrary, I have seen the Southern slave owner put up with more 'cheek' than a white employer would stand."¹

The children of the household possess the memories of many happy days at "Lang Syne." Mrs. McCord was a clear thinker and capable executive in her daily domestic relations and duties as mistress of many slaves, as step-mother of a large family of boys and girls, as a loving wife and efficient mother. Her three children were Langdon Cheves, who married Miss Charlotte Reynolds, of Columbia; Hannah Turquand, who became Mrs. John Taylor Rhett, of Columbia, and Louisa Rebecca, who became Mrs. Augustine T. Smythe, of Charleston,² in whose life interests she was passionately interested.

During these years the family spent the winters at the "Lang Syne" plantation and the summers at Columbia. In or about 1847-8-9 negro masons and carpenters were brought in from "Lang Syne" and, under supervision, constructed the home on the corner of Pendleton and Bull streets, known as the old McCord house, owned at present by Mrs. Allen Jones. This building was at first four rooms, upon tall brick pillars, afterward enclosed, because, as Colonel McCord humorously remarked, the house's "bare legs looked indecent, and needed pantallettes." The wings were added afterward, it being Colonel McCord's very correct ideal that "homes should not be built entire, but should crystalize about the family, and grow with it."

"The interests of Colonel and Mrs. McCord were simi-

¹ Dr. Edward Worthington, one of the oldest physicians in St. Francis, Quebec. The first surgeon in Canada who performed a capital operation under ether as an anæsthetic, and was also among the first to use chloroform. Extracts taken from his letters. Property of Prof. Yates Snowden, University of South Carolina.

² Family records by courtesy of Mr. John Bennett.

lar both in public questions and private studies. Their writing tables stood on either side of the big open fireplace in the library at 'Lang Syne,' and there was constant interchange of sympathy and criticism."¹ We can easily picture the couple writing and reviewing together, reading aloud to each other, often preparing articles under mutual criticism that would appear in the same number of the old Southern Quarterly Review, during those years when William Gilmore Simms was the editor. Simms had secured them both as regular contributors to the Review when he undertook the editorship, in 1849.²

During these happy years appears all that we have of her published work. An examination of this follows:

In 1848 George P. Putnam, of New York, published her "Translation of Bastiat's Sophisms of the Protective Policy," with an appreciative introductory letter by Dr. Francis Lieber, professor of political philosophy and economy in South Carolina College (1835-1856). Dr. Lieber had spent much time in Mrs. McCord's Columbia home, and must have enjoyed a most delightful interchange of thought with Colonel and Mrs. McCord. The translation has all the merits of excellent translation. It is accurate, it is highly appreciative of idiomatic usages, it is presented in polished English, without artificialities. A comparison of Mrs. McCord's translation with Mr. Alexander Mazyck's translation,³ which appeared in installment form in the current numbers of Russell's Magazine, reveals little difference in emphasis. The points of Bastiat are equally well presented in the English by the two translators, but the clear-cut style of Mrs. McCord is more in keeping with the spirit of a polemical discussion than are the, at times, ornate periods of Mr. Mazyck. Evidently the theories of Bastiat had made a deep impression on the mind of Mrs. McCord. In her later essays she quotes him freely, and a few of her magazine articles are translations from his essays, with comments by herself. Bastiat's temperamental conservatism co-ordinated

¹ Library of Southern Literature, sketch by Mrs. McGowan, Vol. VIII, p. 3505.

² Trent's Life of Simms, p. 165.

³ See Russell's Magazine, Vol. I, July, 1857; Vol. II, October, 1857; Vol. III, September, 1858; Vol. V, June, 1859, etc.

easily with her youthful political impressions, and in all probability his opinions may justly be counted a formative element in the life of this political philosopher.

Duyckinck in Vol. II of *Cyclopædia of American Literature* (New York, 1855) gives the following as Mrs. McCord's contributions:

SOUTHERN QUARTERLY—

"Justice and Fraternity." July, 1849.

"The Right to Labor." October, 1849.

"Diversity of the Races, Its Bearing Upon Negro Slavery." April, 1857.

"Negro and White Slavery: Wherein Do They Differ?" July, 1851.

"Enfranchisement of Women." April, 1852.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin." January, 1853.

"Carry on the Slave Trade." January, 1854.

DEBOW'S REVIEW—

"Negro Mania." May, 1852.

"Woman and Her Needs." September, 1852.

"British Philanthropy and American Slavery." March, 1853.

SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER—

"Charity Which Does Not Begin at Home." April, 1853.

Duyckinck in another footnote says: "The Uncle Tom's Cabin movement also called forth from Mrs. McCord '*A Letter to the Duchess of Sutherland from a Lady of South Carolina*,' July 30, 1853, published in the *Charleston Mercury*, and reprinted in several Northern papers."¹

Mrs. Smythe says that it is almost absolutely certain that her mother, Mrs. McCord, wrote also for Russell's Magazine, being, to her knowledge, a great friend and correspondent of Russell and a most probable contributor to the magazine, though, as in many other instances, anonymously. Mrs. McCord's friendship was continued to her daughter, who, as Mrs. Smythe, was on terms of intimate and kindly acquaintance with Russell. Mr. Alexan-

¹ There can be little doubt of the correctness of the above list, since it was probably furnished to Duyckinck by Mrs. McCord or by Colonel McCord, who did not die until 1855, the year of the publication of the *Cyclopædia*.

der Salley, the State historian, has Russell's private list of articles with contributors for the entire magazine except volume IV. Mrs. McCord's name is not in Russell's list. And so we assume that she wrote here anonymously and that her contributions are in volume IV.

Davidson says that Mrs. McCord was a contributor to the Southern Literary Messenger, to DeBow's Review and to the Southern Quarterly Review.¹ A careful examination of the complete files of the Southern Literary Messenger does not show her name. This is no negative proof, however. There are numerous anonymous articles, a few of which suggest Mrs. McCord's style. A few poems are suspiciously like some selections found in "My Dreams," but because there is no signature we have not the right to infer her authorship. In the editorial reminiscences secured and edited by Benjamin Blake Minor, one-time editor of the Messenger, Mrs. McCord's name is not mentioned.

The same problem faces us in a review of DeBow's Magazine. There is not to be found her signature, nor is her name acknowledged by DeBow in his quarterly Table of Contents. However, the Table of Contents of DeBow's Review lists only the signed articles; there are numerous unsigned ones.

And so, accepting the statements of both Duyckinck and Davidson, who agree that Mrs. McCord contributed to the above magazines, we fall back on the assumption that for these magazines, except the Southern Quarterly, she worked anonymously. This is quite regrettable, but it is true to type. The student of the eighteenth century well knows that the would-be author of that day was often a laughing stock. The amateur *litterateur* of the nineteenth century suffered from a consequent modesty. Throughout the ultra-conservative American South he was always secondary to the political man of letters. In aristocracies the rule has ever been the statesman first, the scribbler in his patronage. Then, too, women authors often disguised their names under masculine *noms de*

¹ Living Writers of the South—Davidson, James Woods, pp. 351, 352.

plume. So, both because of talent and sex, Mrs. McCord may have been reticent of a purely literary publicity in the popular magazines.

However, most of her contributions to the *Southern Quarterly Review* are signed, and are easily available. A careful study of these is the introduction we have to an acquaintance with the caliber of Mrs. McCord's intellect and her prose style.

Literary Work

Herein are set forth the political doctrines of *Laissez-faire* and self-determination. Her interest in political and sociological questions is phenomenal. She knows past history, she is alive to current events, and she perceives the tendencies of humanity. She is, above all else, the votress of political economy. Her style is polemical, at times satirical, always coherent and clear. She is virile, intense, at once possessing the force of a statesman's thinking together with the versatility of a woman's wit. As pure literature these magazine articles do not have a place. As attainments of what they set out to do they are brilliantly successful. In every instance she is assuredly on familiar ground; she knows more of the subject than she expresses. She expresses the convictions and reasonings of contemporary thinkers of her section ably. The men and women who cut the fresh pages of the *Southern Quarterly Review* seventy-five years ago read with much relish the convincing and cleverly arranged arguments in support of their position as expressed by Mrs. McCord's ready pen.

Witticisms are found in Mrs. McCord's writings; not airy wit, as might be expected from her French training, but Horatian satire. This, we gather, was also her conversational style.¹ "She was Roman, always Roman, and not even Corinthian, always Doric."²

Mrs. McCord is a conservative. She preaches the gospel of a regime that has nearly passed in the South, and yet a gospel based on some principles of political truth—

¹ "What wit she employed was perhaps ironical or critical, but not notably that. Her trend was serious and polemical."—Mr. John Bennett, Charleston, S. C.

² Davidson, *Living Writers of the South*, sketch of Mrs. McCord.

"*chauvinisme de clocher*," the "windy internationalists" of today would call it—that will endure as long as there be a minority of human opinions of which cognizance must be taken. A collection of her politico-economic writings would be valuable to the student of historic public opinion. She expresses in her reviews the spirit of the South of antebellum days. She advocates State sovereignty, favoring secession, and a political confederation founded upon a community of interests. Her vision was of a great Southern confederacy in which the culture of classical learning would continue to flourish, in which an economic independence would be maintained through the cotton industry, in which the negro would be most comfortable and happy in a state of slavery, and in which the white master, with his labor question settled, would be furnished the leisure requisite for the pursuit of science and art.

Just how Mrs. McCord would have reacted to our twentieth century state of affairs it is difficult to imagine. The men and women of her views were confounded by the social problems that confronted them. We, in youthful arrogance, are prone sometimes to look at those who survive their prime in a spirit that smacks of loving toleration of their charm and old-fashioned viewpoints, forgetting that the heart of that Lost Cause of the sixties was the heart of the world's agony of which the Wilsonian "self-determination" is only a recrudescence. Americans have bled often for it. Heroes will always fight for it. Its name is Liberty!

In Mrs. McCord's comment on the proposed French communistic bank,¹ advocated by Proudhon in the Assembly, she first quotes Bastiat's definition of political economy and both Bastiat's and Molinari's arguments against the socialistic enterprise, balancing these with a degree of polemical vigor against Proudhon's arguments. Then she proceeds to justify the system of interest-bearing bank accounts with which we are so familiar. In a reading of this essay the reader will, of course, recall that Mrs.

¹ The Right to Labor—L. S. M., Southern Quarterly Review, October, 1849, p. 138, sq.

McCord's father was not only an expert in the theory of finance, but that he undertook the management of the young United States Bank at Philadelphia when its affairs were in a most confused state, set its affairs straight, and resigned from an institution of restored credit whose fortunes then passed into the hands of Nicholas Biddle.¹ And back of Mrs. McCord's banking theory we know there is her close observance of two successful bankers in the persons of her father and Colonel McCord. In the course of her argument she draws the truth from its long-shelved hiding place and declares that labor and capital as popularly conceived are not antagonistic, but co-operative. "Labor is capital. Capital is labor insured from a past production through an uncertain present to a future necessity." Her cry is reiterated at the close of the argument against the bank. "Popularize political economy." This she calls the watchdog of society. She contends that all students of statecraft and all potential citizens should master the principles of political economy. She holds that such a knowledge will keep us faithful in peace to the clearest standards of national honor, and optimistic in times of civic strife for the ultimate good. "One of society's closest guards, a kind of shepherd dog as it were of the flock, stands political economy. Watching, barking, wrangling at every intruder, suspicious of outward show, nor satisfied with skin-deep inspection, it examines before admitting all pretenders as true prophets, and strips many a wolf of his sheep's clothing. The evil-inclined, thus, naturally hoot and revile it. The ignorant mistrust it. What do we, its advocates, ask in defense? * * * That the world should learn to know it. We wish no law for its imposition * * * no tax for its protection. Let truth be but heard; there is in the heart of man an instinct to know and to seize it. Error is simply negative; like shadow, it is only want of light. Man * * *

¹ See Bulletin XVII, American Historical Association, Vol. I, pp. 361-371. Langdon Cheves and the United States Bank—Louisa Porter Haskell (Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass.). See also numerous historic records of this period of the early United States Bank.

cannot *make* the light; he can but strive to remove the obstacles which intercept its abundant flow."¹

Her article on "Justice and Fraternity"² is for the most part a translation from the French of Bastiat appearing in the *Journal des Economistes*, numbers 81 and 82, for June, 1848. Bastiat's essay is prefaced and edited by personal comments in the editorial "we." Herein we find phrases in Mrs. McCord's best prose style. She is distinctly anti-Bolshevik in the statement of her opinions against rampant socialism advocated by Proudhon and Gratiot. This article makes an inspiring appeal to leaders of a nation's policy. The author suggests that they should take care to be sufficiently farsighted in order that the masses following them be not misled.³

Of a nature somewhat different is her literary and economic review of "Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet," by the Rev. Charles Kingsley.⁴ The article is critical of the conditions depicted in the novel. Her theme here is the doctrine of *Laissez-faire*. Agreeing heartily with Kingsley, she is resentful of that charity for the foreign downtrodden ones entertained and advertised by Londoners who have a submerged population so near at hand. Dickens took the same stand in his pointed, though tolerant, satire aimed at us through Mrs. Jellyby. Mrs. McCord's patience has not the elasticity of Dickens'. She would probably have Mrs. Jellyby darning her children's tatters at once. And in conclusion she antagonizes the like one-sidedness of the abolitionists' attack on negro slavery in the South.

She contrasts the condition of the blacks of the South with the unprovided-for whites of London and Edinburgh slums, pointing out the differences between agricultural slavery and mercantile and manufacturing corporation enslavement. The negro appears much better off than does the white laborer. "Community duty does not appeal so immediately as does individual duty." "The duties of

¹ The Right to Labor—L. S. M., *Southern Quarterly Review*, pp. 138-169, inc., October, 1849.

² Justice and Fraternity—L. S. M., *Southern Quarterly Review*, pp. 356, sq., July, 1849.

³ Justice and Fraternity—L. S. M., *Southern Quarterly Review*, pp. 370-371, July, 1849.

⁴ Negro and White Slavery—L. S. M., *Southern Quarterly Review*, pp. 118, sq., July, 1851.

life" (we quote from the argument) "are such and are so apportioned that the master of a negro feels it more immediately incumbent upon him to provide for, protect and defend his black slave than does the master of the so-called freeman who of economic necessity is shackled to the treadmill of industry." She says that the masters of these "little brothers" of ours should possess awakened consciences at work for the submerged tenth's advantage, but, knowing human nature in the middle of the nineteenth century, she concludes that it will be a difficult awakening. Of the Southern slaveholder she says: "We love our slaves, not as a miser loves his gold, but as a father loves his children." She looks forward, not yet suggesting remedial means, but at least pointing out errors close at hand to the capitalists and philanthropists and humanitarian theorists of the large Northern manufacturing towns, the social conditions of which badly need investigation and cure.¹ In this article she takes her stand as an ardent political economist again, one who would work with the sources of political error rather than with its symptoms. She advocates the old *Laissez-faire* policy, but weakens it by putting it on the defensive.

Her defense of the institution of slavery is passionate and is undertaken from the viewpoint of the extremist. "Negro emancipation is the emancipation of brute force. Necessarily it would follow, in those regions where the negro race outnumbers its masters, a barbarism tenfold worse than Gothic or Vandal. Upon that, again, inevitably follows the extinction of the cotton crop; and upon the extinction of the cotton crop—certain and uncontrollable as fate—the extinction of civilization." Here we find the voice of that South of the fifties raised on the defensive against the growing abolitionist movement.

The logical development of Mrs. McCord's theory justifies the enslavement of inferior men by superior men as long as society lasts.

Another popular topic of her day on which Mrs. McCord

¹ Negro and White Slavery—Southern Quarterly Review, July, 1851, pp. 126-127.

commented was the question of woman suffrage.¹ The Westminster Review for July, 1851, had contained some equal suffrage articles. The third session of the Women's Rights Convention had been held at Worcester, Massachusetts, on October 15, 1851. Mrs. McCord's essay is based largely on the Westminster Review's article and on the proceedings of the convention. In style she is graceful, but satirical; in policy, conservative; in argument, philosophical. She says that public service in affairs of state is by its nature masculine, and that the men of the race are naturally and harmoniously at home in the discharge of this service. * * * "That woman is neither man's superior, equal, nor inferior; she is his different." This has to us the ring of nature's truth. To quote further, she says that "God, who has made every creature to its place, has perhaps not given woman the most enviable position in his creation, but a most clearly defined position he has given her." * * * "Let her object be to raise herself *in* that position." The Westminster Review's article had pointed out the probable mental equality of the sexes by citing the executive ability of Queen Elizabeth and the inspirational power of Jeanne d'Arc. Mrs. McCord calls on us to imagine the position in which the "virago Elizabeth" would have been when she boxed Essex's ears had it not been for the very law of a society that granted special privilege to Elizabeth as a woman and as a queen, not to her as man's equal in the state or in society. Joan of Arc, she says, "did her magnificent work for France, not as man, but as woman!" "Woman will reach the greatest height of which she is capable—the greatest, perhaps, of which humanity is capable—not by becoming man, but by becoming more than ever woman." These phrases are the expression of the conviction of the old South. Today such opinion sounds ultra-conservative. The national enfranchisement of woman is a fact. Its effects remain to be seen.²

It was during this period, while Mrs. McCord's pen was

¹ Enfranchisement of Women—L. S. M., Southern Quarterly Review, April, 1852, pp. 324, sq.

² Revised from original of 1919 for publication 1920.

probably most productive, that William Gilmore Simms requested her to review for his magazine Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin."¹

Professor Trent says² that Simms considered it somewhat poetic to let the Southern woman reply to the Northern woman. Whether or not Simms took just that view as a basis of his request for Mrs. McCord's criticism, he received and published an article which reveals on the most cursory reading just how far apart were the New England and the South Carolina conceptions of the institution of slavery as it then existed in the States that were to make the Southern Confederacy.

Mrs. McCord, the patient, care-taking mistress of large hereditary holdings, mothering an army of laborers and their care-free families, providing for these negroes of "Lang Syne" food, shelter, medical attention, religious opportunity, work and amusement, finds, when she takes up the critic's pen to review Mrs. Stowe's picture, no tolerance in her ink bottle. Her intolerance of the overdrawn picture is evident from the beginning of the review. She proves conclusively to any reader who knew the old South that Mrs. Stowe was ignorant of the comfortable life that was the rule on Southern plantations, and that she was inaccurate as a dialect writer. Rising to the climax of the review, Mrs. McCord refutes Mrs. Stowe's whole argument successfully. It will be recalled that Mrs. Stowe attempts to persuade the reading public that the negro slave was worthy of the same treatment accorded the Aryan citizen. Mrs. McCord points out that Mrs. Stowe destroys her own argument at its inception by using as her typical characters, not negroes, but quadroons and mulattoes.

Mrs. McCord's criticism of Mrs. Stowe's book from an argumentative and literary standpoint would be irrefutable if it remained simply an invalidation of Mrs. Stowe's imagination. Treated thus in public print, popularly circulated, it is highly possible that the review by the Southern woman of the Northern woman's novel might

¹ *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—L. S. M., *Southern Quarterly Review*, January, 1853, p. 81.

² *Trent's Life of Simms*, pp. 174-176, inc.

have diminished the popular applause that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" received.

However, Mrs. McCord exceeds the necessity of the case, and impairs the strength of her argument by her attempt to justify the institution of negro slavery on humanitarian grounds. There is, of course, no question that the condition of the negro slave under Christian masters was a great improvement over that of his African progenitor. But Mrs. McCord makes her own argument a vulnerable one when, in closing, she says: "Christian slavery, in its full development, free from the fretting annoyance and galling bitterness of abolition interference, is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for his, the negro's, existence."¹

A similar review of "The Life of the Negro Slave" is published in the same issue of the Review from the pen of Colonel D. J. McCord. A comparison of the two reviews is interesting. It is noted that, like many other Southern people, the McCords adhered to that wing of the Democratic party which in the forties endeavored to make friends for the institution of slavery, "maintaining that it was a positive good for both black and white."²

A number of Mrs. McCord's political essays and reviews are available. They all treat of the principles above suggested. In all of them we get the reflection of the author's intellect. Unquestionably it was masculine of classic cast. She is never indefinite; sometimes she will be judged in error, but never found uncertain. Her analysis of economic and political questions form an excellent literary expression of the convictions which set South Carolina against the government of that Union she had helped to form. Mrs. McCord's views are all conservative; to most modern minds ultra-conservative. Her position was always taken on a subject of which she had full knowledge. She does not assay gold mines of California or cotton mills of New England, but she speaks as one having authority on the comfortable and peaceful relation of

¹ Uncle Tom's Cabin—L. S. M., Southern Quarterly Review, January, 1853, p. 120.

² American History—Stephenson, pp. 329-330 and pp. 369-370.

Southern master and negro slave, on adequate banking facilities, and on the undying principles of political science that are discovered and will continue to operate as long as property exists and men have senses.

In the year 1848 the intimate friends of Mrs. McCord were rather astonished by the appearance of her first published poetry. "My Dreams," a collection of fugitive poems, appeared in this year from the press of Carey & Hart, Philadelphia. The poems were read with much curiosity and interest by all who knew the author as an entirely new departure in her literary career.

A close study of these poems reveals a genuine poetic talent, but there is not the certainty of maturity, not the metrical perfection of first-rate poetry. The lyrist is an honestly doubting lyrist in many passages. There are a number of them that are either of adolescent composition, withheld until 1848 for publication, or at least of adolescent conception, possibly worked over for this volume. Hope is the keynote of a majority of the poems in this collection; but in many instances the hope is unaccompanied by any certainty of faith which a woman of Mrs. McCord's full life and wide experience must have developed at the time this collection was published. A few of the poems are narrative myths, a direct reflection of her classic temperament. They suggest early Greek myths, and meet the reader with such titles as "The Daughters of Hope," who are cleverly personified as Fancy and Happiness, and, Happiness being lost in Life's confusion, Fancy assists her mother, Hope, to chase Happiness through all time.¹ We find several more of these delicately suggested fancies explanatory of the world of abstractions. Among these may be mentioned "The Falling Star," "Love, Wisdom, Folly," "The Comet," "The Star That Followed Me," "Conduct of the Sources of Good and Evil," "The Home of Hope" and "The Voice of a Star." Then there is a grouping possible among them of simple narratives of the world of concrete things. For example, the pathetic "Poor Nannie" and "The Blood-

¹ The Daughters of Hope—My Dreams, p. 139.

Stained Rose," "The Birth of the Evergreens" and "Pretty Fanny."

But it is in the third division of these poems that Mrs. McCord's maturity expresses her feelings, and in the poems of this group¹ that deal with the eternal riddle of life and death. They suggest the suffering spirit. "My Dream Child," "The Village Churchyard," "The First Beam of Light," "My Dead," "Ye're Born to Die" and others are found here. Probably the best among them is "The Voice of Years." Of this lyric Dr. Wauchope says:² "She will probably be remembered longer for a poem entitled "The Voice of Years." Davidson says:³ "This is earnest, natural and direct; nothing feeble or even flowery." We quote the entire poem:

THE VOICE OF YEARS.

It floated by, on the passing breeze,
 The voice of years;
 It breathed o'er ocean, it wandered through earth,
 It spoke of the time when words had birth,
 When the spirit of God moved over the sea;
 When earth was only a thing—to be.
 And it sighed, as it passed on that passing breeze,
 The voice of years.

From ocean it came on a murmuring wave,
 The voice of years;
 And it spoke of the time ere the birth of light,
 When earth was hushed 'neath the ocean's might,
 And the waters rolled, and the dashing roar
 Of the angered surge owned not yet the power,
 Which whispers in that murmuring wave,
 The voice of years.

From earth it came, from her inmost deep.
 The voice of years:

¹ No classification as to chronology or subject matter has been made by the editors. The classification herein subjected is based entirely on a study of the contents of "My Dreams."

² Wauchope's *Writers of South Carolina*—Louisa S. McCord.

³ Davidson's *Living Writers of the South*—Mrs. Louisa S. McCord.

It murmured forth with the bubbling stream,
 It came like the sound of a long-past dream—
 And it spoke of the hour ere Time had birth,
 And, solemnly said, it rose from the deep;
 The voice of years.

From heaven it came on a beam of light,
 The voice of years;
 And it spoke of a God who reigned alone,
 Who waked the stars, who lit the sun.
 As it glanced o'er mountain, and river, and wood,
 It spoke of the good and the wonderful God;
 And it whispered to praise that God of Light,
 The voice of years.

It howled in the storm as it threatening passed,
 The voice of years;
 And it spoke of ruin, and fiercest might;
 Of angry friends, and of things of night;
 But raging, as o'er the earth it strode,
 I knelt and I prayed to the merciful God,
 And methought it less angrily howled as it passed,
 The voice of years.

And it came from yon moss-grown ruin gray,
 The voice of years;
 And it spoke of myself, and the years that were gone,
 Of hopes that were blighted, and joys which were flown,
 Of the wreck of so much that was bright and was fair;
 And it made me sad, and I wept to hear,
 As it came from yon moss-grown ruin gray,
 The voice of years.

And it rose from the grave with the song of death,
 The voice of years;
 And I shuddered to hear the tale it told,
 Of blighted youth, and hearts grown cold;
 And anguish and sorrow which crept to the grave
 To take from the spoiler the wound that he gave,
 And sadly it rose from that home of death,
 The voice of years.

But again it passed on the passing breeze,
 The voice of years;
 And it spoke of a God who watched us here,
 Who heard the sigh, and who saw the tear;
 And it spoke of mercy, and of woe;
 There was love and hope in its whispering low;
 And I listened to catch, on that passing breeze,
 The voice of years.

And it spoke of a pain that might not last,
 That voice of years;
 And it taught me to think that the God who gave
 The breath of life could wake from the grave;
 And it taught me to see that this beautiful earth
 Was not only made to give sorrow birth;
 And it whispered that mercy must reign at last,
 That voice of years.

And strangely methought, as it floated by,
 That voice of years
 Seemed fraught with a tone from some higher sphere,
 It whispered around me, that God was near;
 He spoke from the sunbeam, He spoke from the wave,
 He spoke from the ruin, He spoke from the grave,
 'Twas the voice of God, as it floated by,
 That voice of years.

Mrs. McGowan says:¹ "It is easy to believe that had the hard and iron hand of war and much adversity not been laid so heavily on this mind, * * * Southern literature would have been made richer by her works." William Porcher Miles says:² "While * * * it shows the want of a practiced hand in the verse structure, and in its rhythm a not very musical ear, still there is originality and depth of feeling and emotion, a true portrayal of human passion, * * * a bold and fervid imagination that

¹ Library of Southern Literature. Vol. VIII. p. 3503, sq., sketch.

² Biographical sketch by Hon. W. P. Miles written in 1880, privately printed. Lent by Mrs. Augustine Smythe, Sr.

gave unmistakable evidence as well as promise of genuine poetical genius."

It was not until three years later, in 1851, that Mrs. McCord essayed a longer poetic effort in "Caius Gracchus," a tragedy in five acts. Here we find maturity and a greater care in preparation. To quote Mr. Miles¹ further in reference to the "Caius Gracchus:" "It abounds with striking passages full of high and noble thoughts, clothed in language well fitted to give them just expression." The dedication needs no comment:

DEDICATION OF "CAIUS GRACCHUS."

To My Son:

Too young thou art to read a mother's heart;
 Too young to guess that quenchless fount of love
 Which ever gushes forth in joy and woe,
 Limitless, always—if careworn and sad,
 By want or sickness bowed almost to earth,
 Or yet if triumphing in life's success—
 Flattered, beloved, admired—the mother finds
 (Be she true woman with a woman's heart)
 No moment when that heart can idly rest
 From the long love which ever fetters it
 In bondage to her child. My boy, thine eye
 Some day perchance may fall upon these lines,
 And, catching here the shadow of my love,
 Thy soul may guess its fullness, and may feel
 Through every struggle in this changing life,
 That, like a guardian angel, hovering round,
 To comfort, check—to pity, or to blame—
 To chide, to hope, to pray—it watching stands,
 But never to condemn. A mother's heart
 Might throb itself away in patient woe,
 Might break to end its pain—but never, never
 Could deem her child a thing of vice or shame.
 God bless thee, boy! And make thee stainless, pure,
 Upright and true, e'en as my thought doth paint thee.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The main source of the plot is the story of the Gracchi, which Mrs. McCord follows rather closely. The play was probably never intended for the stage; it belongs to that class of classic closet dramas that were in vogue in the first half of the past century. The character interpretation is probably the strongest and most valuable work. Caius is heroic, and his girl wife is as winsome as a Roman girl could well be; the mob in its vacillations is accurately drawn, and Cornelia is really a masterpiece. The probability is that the real Cornelia was a favorite heroine of Mrs. McCord's. Their lives bear similarities in biography; they were called upon to make supreme sacrifices that were identical, and they endured with similar silent heroism.

Mrs. McCord's keen woman understanding of the masculine viewpoint is unusual. In Act I, Scene 3, she counsels Caius' wife, Licinia:

"A quiet, comeliness there is becomes
A woman's greeting; and, believe me, dear,
However daring bold himself may be,
Man never loves within a woman's eye
To see the mimic of his conduct glassed.
'Tis much endurance, quiet fortitude,
That make her life and beauty."¹

Her grasp of Roman politics is rarely found in the average Southern woman of her day (though Latin literature was quite commonly a property of Southern women as with Southern men), but to Mrs. McCord it was but a mental step from the politics of one republic badly in need of reform in one hemisphere to another in another hemisphere and of a different age.

In many places she puts her own steady, calm philosophy of life into the mouths of her characters. For example, in counseling Caius, Cornelia says:

"Be cool, be cool! and heed that you do not,
In blaming one extreme, to the other rush."

¹ Caius Gracchus. H. Kernot, 633 Broadway, New York, 1851. Cf. (edition in Library of Congress). Quotation Act I, Scene 3.

From the standpoint of American dramatic history this play has been classified by several as purely a closet drama. To this we agree; yet there are passages which would be highly appreciated if presented on the American stage. Particularly so are such passages as may be regarded as prophetic of her own life and of subsequent years in South Carolina.

"Daughter, we can but wait until we find

What darkness in the cloud which overhangs us."

* * * * * "The struggle come

'Twixt life and honor,—I would bid him die

What though the effort burst my mother's heart!

When virtue's weighed 'gainst vice, good men must die

To throw their lives in the balance."

The orations of Gracchus to the mob are quite suggestive of the Roman orations in Julius Cæsar. Of course, there is extant a wide material available for source selection in the original Latin for both the hero's methods and rhetoric. These were easily at Mrs. McCord's disposal. But in English drama her models most closely followed were probably the plays of that school of which Addison's "Cato" is a good example.

Of the short conversational passages there is adverse criticism. Dr. Wauchope says: "The dialogue is heavy."¹ In places it is unwieldy within the prescribed measures of the blank verse used. Occasionally Mrs. McCord makes another error in infusing into Roman conversation certain idiomatic, untranslatable epithets, such as "sauce-box" and "humbug," which is obviously beneath the level of the drama's usual dignity and would have been better omitted in a later edition of the play that never materialized. We think that for majesty of theme, delineation of character and quotability of frequent passages this play, Mrs. McCord's most mature poetic production, deserves no uncertain place in representative American drama. It compares favorably with "Francesca da Rimini," by George Henry Boker, which Professor Arthur Hobson

¹ Wauchope's *Writers of South Carolina*—Louisa S. McCord.

Quinn classifies as "the climax of romantic tragedy in this country."¹ "Caius Gracchus" lacks the pure young love *motif* of the "Francesca," but has strong claim to tragic excellence, and in point of quotable passages we think that it outstrips the "Francesca" both in number and beauty of the lines. In speaking of her son, Cornelia exclaims:

"Gods, I thank ye
For that his spirit lags not in the race
Of its youth's glorious promise."

And no tribute can so fully suggest the confidence and understanding that must have existed between Mrs. McCord and her soldier son as she herself portrays unintentionally in the following dialogue between Cornelia and the Gracchus:

Gracchus:

"Wolves breed not lambs, nor can the lioness
Rear fawns among her litter. You but chide
The spirit, mother, which is born from you.

Cornelia:

Curb it, my son; and watch against ambition!
Half-demon and half-god, she oft misleads
With the bold face of virtue. I know well
The breath of discontent is loud in Rome;
And a hoarse, murmuring vengeance smoulders there
Against the tyrannous rule which, iron-shod,
Doth trample out man's life. The crisis comes;
But oh! beware, my son, how you shall force it!

Gracchus:

Nay, let it come, that dreaded day of doom,
When by the audit of his cruel wrongs
Heaped by the rich oppressor on the crowd
Of struggling victims, he must stand condemned
To vomit forth the ill-got gains that gorge

¹ Representative American Plays—Arthur Hobson Quinn.

His luxury to repletion. Let it come!
 The world can sleep no longer. Reason wakes
 To know man's rights, and forward progress points.

Cornelia:

By reason led, and peaceful wisdom nursed,
 All progress is for good. But the deep curse
 Of bleeding nations follows in the track
 Of mad ambition, which doth cheat itself
 To find a glory in its lust of rule;
 While piling private ill on public wrong,
 Beneath the garb of patriotism, hides
 Its large-mawed cravings; and would thoughtless plunge
 To every change, however riot waits,
 With feud intestine by mad uproar driven,
 And red-eyed murder, to reproach the deed.
 Death in its direst forms doth wait on such.

Gracchus:

Man lives to die, and there's no better way
 To let the shackled spirit find its freedom
 Than in a glorious combat 'gainst oppression.
 I would not grudge the breath lost in the struggle.

Cornelia:

Nor I, when duty calls. I am content,
 May but my son prove worthy of the crisis;
 Not shrinking from the trial, nor yet leaping
 Beyond the marked outline of licensed right;
 Curbing his passions to his duty's rule;
 Giving his country all—life, fortune, fame,
 And only clutching back, with miser's care,
 His all-untainted honor. But take heed!
 The world doth set itself on stilts, to wear
 The countenance of some higher, better thing.
 'Tis well to seek this wisely; but with haste
 Grasping too high, like child beyond its reach,
 It trips in the aspiring and thus falls
 To lowlier condition. Rashness drags

Remorse, and darkest evil in her train.
 Pause, ere the cry of suffering pleads to heaven
 Against this fearful mockery of right;
 This license wild, which smothers liberty
 While feigning to embrace it.

Gracchus:

Though fantastic

Doth drapery evil thus with unsketched ills.
 No heart-sick maid nor dream-struck boy am I
 To scare myself with these. There's that in man
 Doth long to rise by nature. Ever he,
 Couching in lethargy, doth wrong himself.

Cornelia:

Most true and more. I reverence human mind;
 And with a mingled love and pride I kneel
 To nature's inborn majesty in man.
 But as I reverence, therefore would I lend
 My feeble aid, this mighty power to lead
 To its true aim and end. Most often 'tis
 When crowds do wander wide of right, and fall
 To foul misuse of highest purposes,
 The madness of their leaders drags them on.
 I would not check aspiring, justly poised;
 But rather bid you "on"—where light is clear,
 And your track plainly marked. I scorn the slang
 Of "greedy populace," and "dirty crowd,"
 Nor slander thus the nature which I bear.
 Men in the aggregate not therefore cease
 Still to be men; and where untaught they fall,
 It is a noble duty to awake
 The heart of truth that slumbers in them still.
 It is a glorious sight to rouse the soul,
 The reasoning heart that in the nation sleeps!
 And wisdom is a laggard at her task
 When but in closet speculations toiling
 She doth forget to share her thought abroad
 And make mankind her heir."

Following Miles, previously quoted, we would conclude that had Mrs. McCord had that sharpest of all spurs, necessity, "to prick the sides of her intent," American poetry would have been greatly enriched. No great poet has ever lived whose whole time was not dedicated to the muse of poetry. Of all mistresses she is most jealous and exacting and allows not even dalliance with any other than herself.

Service to the Confederacy

But neither as politico-economic writer nor as poet has Mrs. McCord left as lasting an impression and as grateful a memory with those who knew her as in the capacity of executive and war nurse during the sixties in Columbia and in Richmond.

Colonel McCord died in 1855¹, and other bereavements greatly saddened her life at this time. Two years she spent in European travel, receiving much courtesy from persons with whom she had friends in common. As her son grew older she spent a greater portion of her time in Columbia in the old McCord house. Here she reidentified herself with the society of antebellum Columbia. The circle of friends who met and talked with her here included never-to-be-forgotten names of those days that tried men's souls in South Carolina.

Her estimate of her compeers was: "I venture to affirm that there are no men, at any point upon the surface of this earth, so favored in their lot, so elevated in their natures, so just in their duties, so up to the emergencies, and so ready for the trial of their lives, as are the six million masters in the Southern States."²

Beside such men she had thought and written, championing the institutions of a comfortable passing era, and beside such men she was willing and ready to labor and sacrifice for her heritage and convictions.

The War Between the Sections found Mrs. McCord

¹ O'Neill's Bench and Bar—D. J. McCord, data.

² Trent's Life of Simms, p. 176.

easily the foremost woman of Columbia in executive efficiency.

Early in the summer of 1861 the Soldiers' Relief Association¹ was organized, with Mrs. McCord as president. In July of 1861 she was made president of the Ladies' Clothing Association. The first-named organization made the uniforms for the company of Captain L. Cheves McCord, his mother furnishing the material, which was of the regulation gray cloth, and stitched with silk; and the company of young patricians, armed also at Mrs. McCord's expense, is reported to have looked most attractive as they marched toward Virginia.

"It was not Mrs. McCord's way to go from one work to another and have divided interests,"² and she resigned her presidency of the Soldiers' Relief Association in order to give her whole time to the military hospital established within the South Carolina College walls.³ This was in 1862, and here she gave her most prized service.

In her home, at the northwest corner of Pendleton and Bull streets, across the street from the college property, she received supplies from the women of the city—supplies available for nourishment for the sick, and hospital comfort.⁴ Early every day there was made in her kitchen a supply of corn bread and thick broth, which she always seasoned herself, and this, helped into plates and left on a long dresser on her back piazza, served day after day, month after month, as the nourishment for wounded soldiers who could drag themselves across the street from the convalescent building on the campus.⁵

"From the first she systematically devoted every effort to preparations * * * for a long and desperate struggle. Her belief was that * * * the country should be made self-supporting, and in proof of the sincerity of this belief she immediately planted large provision crops and endeavored in every way to develop the resources of her plantation. Workshops of all kinds were established there;

¹ South Carolina Women in the Confederacy, p. 22, pp. 79-80.

² Biographical sketch by Miss Isabel D. Martin, private print.

³ South Carolina Women in the Confederacy, p. 96.

⁴ Idem, p. 91.

⁵ Biographical sketch by Miss Isabel D. Martin, private print.

looms were set up, cloth woven, and even shoes made. * * * All her carpets were cut into blankets; all wool mattresses were ripped up and their contents spun into yarn for soldiers' socks.

"Even the hair of rabbits killed on the plantation was saved, and, when combined with a little wool and the ravellings of old black silk scraps, made a beautiful gray yarn, of which officers' gloves were knitted. All of the lead from her houses—even the lead pipes from an elaborate system of waterworks on her plantation—was sent to be melted into bullets. Before the end of the war all her horses had gone into the army. Her negroes were always at the service of the government when needed. Squads of them at different times were sent to Charleston to work on the fortifications, and in each instance she personally superintended their preparation and outfit, for under no circumstances did she ever forget to care for her faithful servants."¹ And yet while contributing so fully of her means, and so skillfully supervising its disposal, she was personally always present all day in the hospital, and found time to knit three socks² every day. She used coarse wool and large needles, and this makes for rapid knitting; but we who have knitted and purled during the great war know that three socks a day with any needles means a wonderful steadiness. "And yet all the while her hands were knitting, her strong creative mind would have worked too. We find scribblings on backs of envelopes, newspapers, magazines, etc., when a moment's respite gave her time to write down a thought that came spontaneous from her virile mind."³

But in the midst of all this activity there came from second Manassas the news that Cheves McCord had made the supreme sacrifice of his splendid young life. All who knew Mrs. McCord say that she suffered a grief for her only son, her first-born, which only her closest friends could surmise. She was very calm and silent and con-

¹ Biographical sketch by Miss Isabel D. Martin, private print, several times quoted. Copies owned by Prof. Yates Snowden and by Mrs. Augustine T. Smythe, Sr.

² Library of Southern Literature, Vol. VIII, p. 3503, sq.

³ Library of Southern Literature, Vol. VIII, p. 3503, sq.

tinually busy—busy for other women's sons. Mrs. Chestnut, who visited her in 1864, writes in her diary: "I spent today with Mrs. McCord, at her (the college) hospital. She is dedicating her grief for her son—sanctifying it, one might say—by giving her soul and body, her days and nights, to the wounded soldiers at the hospital." And not only was her work patient and cheerful and tender in its ministrations in the hospital; it was also capably executive. She managed the scheduling of the assistant nurses, planned the provisioning of the larder, that was often meager and largely dependent on gratuitous contributions. She regulated the convalescents, she wrote letters for them, talked with them, soothed the restless, gave Christian comfort to the dying.

During the three dreadful days while Sherman occupied Columbia Mrs. McCord's home had been surrendered and was used by General O. O. Howard.¹

Any detail of the agony of those days to Columbians is best left in the records, where they may be read. Three generations in South Carolina have paid the price of invasion.

On the morning of February 17, 1865, Mrs. McCord "received an ill-spelled but kindly warning of the horrors to come, written upon a torn sheet of my dead son's note book, which with private papers of every kind now strewn my yard." * * * "The writer, a lieutenant of the army of invasion, said he had relatives and friends at the South, and that he felt for us; that his heart bled to think of what was threatened. 'Ladies,' he wrote, 'I pity you; leave this town—go anywhere to be safer than here.' This was written in the morning; the fires were in the evening and night."² Of course, Mrs. McCord never considered anything but the duty to her city, and in particular to the college hospital, until its evacuation, which was made just before the entrance of the Union army.

¹ South Carolina Women in the Confederacy, p. 98.

² The Burning of Columbia—Article by William A. Nicholson, p. 8.

³ Report of the Committee of Citizens, ex-Chancellor J. P. Carroll, chairman. Excerpt from Mrs. McCord's narrative appearing in p. 10 of the original and in p. 21 of the corrected report published May, 1866.

During the occupation of the city by Sherman Mrs. McCord remained in her own home, though the house, such part as was not reserved for her use, was occupied by General Howard and his staff as headquarters. When General Howard left, a guard was set before the premises "to protect it," which guard promptly set work to pillage the house, though a young officer gave some protection. Her two daughters had been sent to the hospital by her previous to Sherman's entrance to the town in the hope of greater protection for them under the hospital's flag during the turmoil. General Howard sent up an invitation to the ladies to join himself and his staff at dinner, but, needless to say, the invitation was declined. Mrs. Smythe, Mrs. McCord's daughter, recalls that in her presence one of General Howard's officers cut from its frame on the wall, with his saber, the lithographed *facsimile* of the Ordinance of Secession, crumpled it and threw it into the fireplace. Mrs. Smythe, coming behind him, immediately snatched it from the fireplace, hid it, and after the war had it remounted and framed it. It is now in her library, where, a short time ago, it fell on her head, occasioning her to say that she had never expected to have her brains knocked out by the Ordinance of Secession.

On the morning of the 18th, at the call of the women of the city, Mrs. McCord undertook to present to General Howard a paper inquiring what the program for the night of the 18th was to be. The city was smoking or in ashes, according to the direction of the wind. There were few men in Columbia—all very old or wounded; there were numerous refugee women from the low-country plantations and many young girls. We quote the record of the interview from Chancellor Carroll's report, page 23:

"Having undertaken to present a paper to General Howard, sought an interview with that officer, second in command of the invading army, and found General Sherman with him. * * *

"I handed him the paper, which he glanced at, and then in a somewhat subdued voice, but standing so near General Sherman that I think it impossible that the latter

could have helped hearing him, he said: 'You may rest satisfied, Mrs. McCord, that there will be nothing of the kind happening tonight * * * tonight will be perfectly quiet.' And it was quiet, peaceful as the grave, the ghost of its predecessor."

On this night, worn with the agony of the invasion, Mrs. McCord consented to leave her home and spend the night on the campus in the home of Dr. J. L. Reynolds.¹

* * * * *

After Appomattox, when the sword was sheathed again, "defeated, yet without a stain," when military obtuseness essayed to reconstruct military disaster, South Carolina was logically the most intense sufferer of all the South. Mrs. McCord, having given all to the Confederacy, lived long enough to taste the humiliation of reconstruction. However, when, in 1869, the suggestion was made that a monument be erected to the Confederate soldier, it was to Mrs. McCord that the women of the State at once turned for leadership.² She was made the first president of the association, and in this capacity she organized the first efforts of Columbia women to perpetuate the memory of that hero, the Confederate soldier, who stands in the annals of military glory beside Leonidas, who equals in gallantry the Swiss Guards at the Tuileries, or in fortitude and resourcefulness his own Revolutionary ancestors. President Wilson and the members of the League of Nations have endeavored to interpret in the self-determination policy the principles of that hero, whose stand for his principles against the might of the majority will continue to be made throughout the ages until right is mighty enough to hold her own against tyranny and greed and interest.

During the horrible years of the Radical misrule Mrs. McCord, with many other Southern women who had given all unavailingly, simply waited. * * * Mr. John Bennett writes: "I think it may truly be said that after the Confederacy fell she had no favorite garden spot; she remained until summons beyond."

¹ *Idem*, p. 22.

² The South Carolina Monument Association—Origin, History and Work, pp. 10-12.

Heartsick over the obnoxious Federal Amendment and its reconstructive effect, and reluctant, bitterly reluctant, to take the Federal oath of allegiance to the government whose allegiance she had abjured, she hoped, once and for all, Mrs. McCord left South Carolina for a time, went to Charlottesville, Va., and thence further to Canada—to Coburg and other points, where she remained, bitter with the defeat of her cause, heartsick over the ruinous results, and grief-struck by many deaths, her son's in chief. But, finding that she could not remain away from ruined, humiliated Carolina, she returned, and, though tragically embittered by it, took the oath of allegiance that she might have the disposal of her own property.

During her absence, it should here be noted, the presidency of the Monumental Association descended on Mrs. Reynolds, wife of Professor Reynolds, of South Carolina College, by whom the work subject to organization was ably carried forward to completion and to whom much credit should be given.

The latter years of Mrs. McCord's life were spent in Charleston, in the home of her son-in-law, Major Augustine T. Smythe, and his wife, her daughter Louisa.

In the spring of 1879 the unveiling of the Confederate monument took place at Columbia.¹ It must have been a sort of satisfaction to Mrs. McCord to see this an accomplished fact. A part of the program for the unveiling of the monument she planned. Here her little granddaughter, Cheves McCord, actively participated in the ceremony, accompanied by Beverly Means, Roberta Beck and Mary Dantzer, all posthumous daughters of battlefield heroes who left their brides behind them.

In the fall of the year, on November 23, 1879, after a brief illness at her home in Charleston, she died.² Her grave in Magnolia Cemetery is, according to her own characteristic desire, marked by only a very simple and modest stone, upon which, beyond the ordinary trenchant biographical data, there are but two words, most fitting, after the sadly embittered close of her life, and its weariness.

¹ South Carolina Monument Association—Origin, History and Work, p. 31.

² News and Courier, November 27, 1879.

ness: "At Rest." It may be found beside the grave of her illustrious father, Langdon Cheves, which is marked by a tall monolith, overlooking the broad Cooper and the marshes beyond.

But her spirit has not passed from us. During the recent great war of her direct descendants, one grandson voluntarily served with the Young Men's Christian Association in Siberia; three great-grandsons in France; one in the aviation service; one, an engineer at the port terminal in Charleston; one grandson engaged as speaker and leader in Charleston's war work throughout America's participation in the struggle. For, of the men, as of the women, it may be truly said that each to his opportunity, as fortune fell to him, did everything that lay in his power, in every way, to sustain and to forward the country's cause, with an equal ability and devotion. And of the women who share her ancestry: "There was not one who did not work, in every field that needed assistance, and in every way, with indomitable energy, from the time that the war began and America entered—and with marked ability and devotion."¹ Her only surviving child, Mrs. Augustine T. Smythe, Sr., began knitting long before America entered the war. She kept an account of over two hundred and fifty pairs of socks; after that she simply knitted on.

There is little that one who did not know Mrs. McCord can say which is comparable to the scattered fragments left by her contemporaries.

Captain Washington A. Clark, of Columbia, recalls her as "a woman of remarkable and striking personality, beloved by all." She was tall and of queenly carriage; her hair and eyes were dark, making a notable contrast with the exquisite whiteness of her skin. In her later years she was pale; in early years her coloring was delicate and fine. There are no available portraits of her. The bust by Powers is photographed and appears with this monograph, the wood cut reproduction is from a youthful daguerreotype.

¹ Quotation from correspondence with Mr. John Bennett.

Professor James B. Angell speaks of her as "a most gifted and learned woman." Professor Trent, in his "Life of Simms," says that Mrs. McCord was the foremost woman writer of the South at that period.

Miss Isabel Martin, of Columbia, wrote of her: "It is impossible for me even to approach doing justice to the magnitude of her services, her self-abnegation, her supreme devotion to the cause in which her faith was entire, and for which she gave up more than life."

The Hon. W. Porcher Miles wrote after her death, in commenting on her patriotism: "But it is not as a poet that the name of Louisa S. McCord will be most honored and cherished in her native South Carolina. It is as a devoted daughter of the State, proud of its history, sensitive of its honor, willing to sacrifice all she possessed and all she held most dear in its defense, that her memory will live longest among her people."

In concluding we can say little else. Pure, high-minded, dignified, intelligent, dutiful, patient, the woman was worthy of her sex. Impulsive in resolve, enduring through trial, undefeated at surrender, the patriot was worthy of her State. Clear in diction, direct in style, classic in inspiration, the scholar was worthy of her school.

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